THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW!
TALES OF HORROR
HAND OF FATE!

Supermouse
STARTLING COMICS
JETTA
MYSTERY COMICS
FANTASTIC TALES
COSMO CAT
STARTLING COMICS
STRANGE MYSTERIES
DARING ADVENTURES
STARTLING COMICS
MYSTERY Tales
EXCITING COMICS
Famous Funnies
STRANGE WORLDS
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JETTA
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BARNYARD COMICS
EXCITING COMICS
EERIE
EXCITING COMICS
CASPER CAT
DARING ADVENTURES

12¢
STRANGE MYSTERIES
SEAL OF QUALITY
SUPER COMICS
No. 12
What was the mystery behind the... "HAND OF FATE?" DON'T DARE MISS THIS SUSPENSEFUL TALE!
PLUS: "THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW!"

STRANGE MYSTERIES
UNFOLDS THE TALE OF...
ALCHEMY
BACK IN THE MIDDLE-AGES, THE MYSTERIOUS MEN OF SCIENCE WERE CALLED ALCHEMISTS! THEIR LABORATORIES WERE DARK AND GLOOMY! PAPERS COVERED WITH MYSTIC SIGNS WERE STREWN ABOUT, AND BAD ODORS FROM THEIR WEIRD MIXTURES CAUSED PEOPLE TO LOOK UPON ALCHEMY AS SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL! AND THE ALCHEMIST, A MAN FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
WORD OF MEN DEALING IN "STRANGE" EXPERIMENTS HAD PEOPLE SPREADING STORIES ABOUT... SOME SAYING THAT GREMLINS CAME OUT OF THE SMOKEY DUNGEONS OF MYSTERY! EVEN SWEARING THEY THEMSELVES HAVE ACTUALLY SEEN THESE CREATURES!
BUT DESPITE THE TALKS AND RUMORS, THE ALCHEMIST KEPT AT HIS LABORATORY, AND THROUGH THE AGES CAME UP WITH ANSWERS THAT TODAY ARE SO IMPORTANT IN MODERN SCIENCE!

A TALE OF HORROR

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW!

ONCE MORE HANS BRUCKNER IS IN TROUBLE! ORDINARILY A KIND AND GENTLE SOUL, HANS CANNOT CONTROL AN INSANE TEMPER THAT VIOLENTLY ERUPTS WHEN TAUNTED FOR HIS UNGAINLY AND APELIKE APPEARANCE. THIS EVIL FORCE LED HIM TO MANY NEAR TRAGEDIES WHICH DROVE HIM OUT OF TOWN AFTER TOWN!

WE'VE WARNED YOU BEFORE, HANS BRUCKNER. THIS IS FINAL! YOU MUST LEAVE OUR TOWN! WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND HERE!

CALL ME AN APE, WILL YOU?

BROWN & GANTZ

GOOD RIDDANCE, I SAY!

IT'S A PITY, HE'S SUCH A GOOD GARDENER, AND SEEMS SO MILD...

MILD! HUH! HE NEARLY KILLED HERBERT KLAUS LAST WEEK, AND JUST BECAUSE KLAUS CALLED HIM A BIG MONKEY!

DISCONSOLATE, UNHAPPY, HANS BRUCKNER TRUDGED WEARILY ONTO THE NEXT TOWN AS HE HAD DONE SO MANY TIMES BEFORE.

WHY MUST I BE CURSED WITH SUCH AN EVIL TEMPER? WHY MUST IT FOLLOW AND TORMENT ME, LIKE MY BLACK SHADOW THAT LIES NOW THERE BEFORE ME?

BROODING DARKLY, HANS REGISTERED AT AN INN AND AS HE ASCENDED TO HIS ROOM, IN HIS MIND THERE GREW A CONVICTION OF WHAT HE MUST DO.
THERE'S A STRANGE GUEST. I'D BEST BE KEEPING AN EYE ON HIM, TONIGHT!
AS THE NIGHT WORE ON, HANS BRUCKNER CAME TO HIS GRIM DECISION...
CRASH
WHAT'S GOING ON IN THERE? OPEN UP! THIS IS THE INNKEEPER. OPEN UP, I SAY!!
GETTING NO RESPONSE, THE INNKEEPER LET'S HIMSELF IN WITH HIS PASS KEY, AND...
THE NEXT MORNING...
GOOD! YOU'RE AWAKE! WHATEVER YOUR TROUBLES ARE, MY SON, IN TIME YOU'LL FIND THAT THEY DISAPPEAR LIKE THE SHADOWS OF NIGHT BEFORE THE MORNING SUN!
YES, PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT. STRANGELY ENOUGH, THAT MORNING SUN BRINGS ME A GOOD AND DIFFERENT FEELING!
TODAY IS CARNIVAL DAY. WHY NOT GO OUT AND JOIN THE CROWDS AND FORGET YOUR TROUBLES?
YOU'VE BEEN KIND, HERR INNKEEPER. I WILL TAKE YOUR ADVICE. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS I FEEL IN A HOLIDAY MOOD!

STEP UP, GOOD CITIZENS! GET YOUR SILHOUETTE CUT OUT FROM YOUR SHADOW! ... YOU... THE APE-LIKE ONE THERE... STEP UP AND I'LL DO YOURS FREE!
HA HA HA HA!
KURT
STRANGELY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE, THE LAUGHTER DOES NOT DISTURB BRUCKNER. GOOD NATUREDLY HE AMBLED UP TO THE PLATFORM.
RIGHT OVER HERE, APE-ONE. STAND WHERE SUN WILL THROW YOUR SHADOW ON THE CANVAS.
WHAT STRANGE MANNER OF CREATURE ARE YOU? YOU HAVE NO SHADOW!
WHAT?
KURT
I...I'VE... LOST... MY... SHADOW! IT CAN'T BE! PEOPLE CAN'T LOSE THEIR SHADOWS!
SUDDENLY PROFESSOR KURT REALIZED THAT IN HANS BRUCKNER HE HAS A GOLD MINE... IF ONLY HE CAN PROVE WHAT HE HAS JUST SEEN. HE RUSHED HANS INTO THE TENT.
AMAZING... NO MATTER HOW I SHINE THIS LIGHT THERE IS NO SHADOW. WHAT IS YOUR NAME, FELLOW?
HANS BRUCKNER... BUT...I..DON'T UNDERSTAND...
WHY HANS, YOU'VE LOST YOUR SHADOW. JOIN MY SHOW AND THAT'S THE WAY WE'LL BILL YOU! THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW! YOU'LL MAKE A FORTUNE!
WHY NOT? ALL MY LIFE I'VE BEEN LOOKED UPON AS A FREAK... WHY NOT GET PAID FOR BEING ONE?

HANS WAS HAPPY. HE ENJOYED HIS NEW LIFE WITHOUT HIS SHADOW
AND HERE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IS THE MIRACLE OF THE AGE! HANS BRUCKNER THE MAN WITHOUT A SHADOW.... STEP RIGHT UP.....STEP RIGHT IN!
PRST.
YOU CALL THAT A MAN? LOOKS MORE LIKE A MONKEY TO ME!
AT ONE TIME I COULD HAVE STRANGLED HIM FOR SAYING THAT... BUT NOW...
I'M A MAN ALL RIGHT, BUT I BET ON PAYDAY, I'LL MAKE A MONKEY OUT OF YOU!
THE CARNIVAL MOVED ON TO ITS NEXT STOP AND AN EVENING LATER, AFTER THE SHOW...
LOOK! THAT'S THE MAN WHO WAS LAUGHTING AT HANS THE OTHER DAY!
HANS WILL BE SURPRISED WHEN HE COMES BACK FROM TOWN!
MAN FOUND STRANGLED!
I'M LATE, I DON'T WANT THE CARNIVAL TO LEAVE WITHOUT ME!
YOU...YOU CLUMSY APE! WHY DON'T YOU LOOK WHERE YOU ARE GOING?
MY APOLOGIES, MEIN HERR, BUT I'M LATE!
YOU WORRIED US HANS! WE THOUGHT YOU LEFT US!
C'MON HANS! REACH OUT AND WE'LL GIVE YOU A HAND UP!

THE NEXT DAY....
EXTRA! KILLER ON THE LOOSE! STRANGLER STRIKES AGAIN!
STRANGE! THAT'S THE MAN I KNOCKED DOWN LAST NIGHT!
DAILY NEWS
STRANGLER STRIKES AGAIN
KILLER ON THE LOOSE
SO IT WENT. WHENEVER THE CARNIVAL MOVED A STRANGLED CORPSE WAS LEFT BEHIND. LIKE A MALIGNANT SHADOW, DEATH SEEMED TO FOLLOW ITS EVERY MOVE.
WE ARE SORRY, HERR KURT, BUT WE MUST QUESTION YOUR PEOPLE AGAIN.
IT'S BECOMING STRANGE, HERR KURT, THESE STRANGLINGS WHENEVER YOUR CARNIVAL GOES.
SO YOU MUST BOTHER MY PEOPLE! MAKE THEM SO NERVOUS THEY CAN'T WORK! AND WHY? SINCE THESE KILLINGS HAPPEN AFTER WE LEAVE A TOWN. AND I CAN PERSONALLY SPEAK FOR EVERYONE IN MY SHOW AT THE TIME!
INSIDE THE TENT, BRUCKNER OVERHEARD, AND A FEAR THAT HAD BEEN STEADILY MOUNTING IN HIM TURNED TO PANIC AS HE SUDDENLY REALIZED A STRANGE THING.
SINCE THE DAY I LOST MY SHADOW THERE HAVE BEEN THESE KILLINGS. AND IN EACH CASE THE VICTIM MOCKED ME. BUT I FELT NO ANGER... WHY? CAN IT BE THAT MY SHADOW... ... NO I MUSTN'T THINK OF IT...
HANS! SINCE YOU JOINED OUR SHOW THESE KILLINGS HAVE DOGGED US. I KNOW IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, BUT I MUST LET YOU GO. WHO KNOWS, PERHAPS YOUR LOST SHADOW WILL REJOIN YOU AND YOU'LL BE A WHOLE MAN AGAIN!

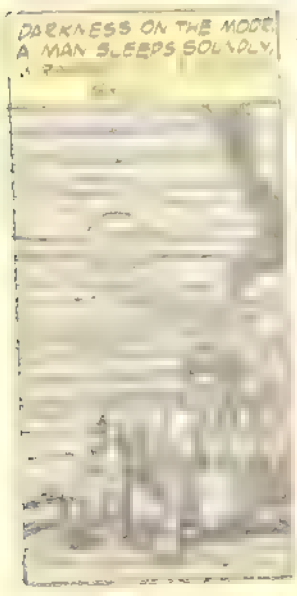
I'LL COUNT OUT YOUR MONEY NOW...
SEVENTY FIVE, SEVENTY SIX...
WHY... WHY SHOULD KURT CHOOSE TO FIRE ME? I WAS HAPPY WITH THE CARNIVAL!
HANS... EEEAYYYY... NO HANS NO!
PLEASE HANS, NO.....
AAAAARRGGHH
KURT! DEAD... STRANGLED! AND HE CALLED MY NAME! IT'S AS I SUSPECTED....THE SHADOW OF MY EVIL TEMPER STILL HAUNTS ME!
WHAT HAPPENED?
IT'S MY SHADOW ...MY SHADOW...

I MUST GET OUT OF THE
DARKNESS
WHO WOULD HAVE EVER THOUGHT THAT
HANS BRUCKNER COULD
SHOULD
HIMSELF, NO-
LOOK! IN DEATH HE HAS FOUND HIS SHADOW!

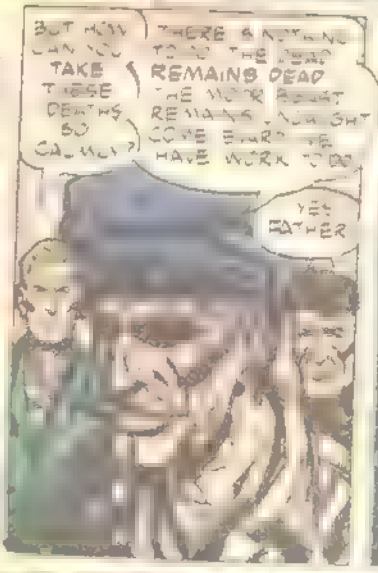
A TALE OF HORROR

[illegible] DAGGER [illegible] BY NO HUMAN HANDS!

HAND OF FATE!



HOURS LATER WHEN THE DARKNESS FALLS AND NIGHT IS



NEVER SEE YOU ANY MORE. YOU LIVE IN YOUR HOUSE LIKE A PRISONER!
YOU PRESS YOUR SUIT!
I WOULD NOT PRESS THERE IF I COULD SEE KATRINA AT YOUR HOME ELSTED BUT YOU HAVE BARRED YOUR HOME TO ME. WHY..? I SHALL NEVER UNDERSTAND. I HAVE NOT SEEN HER FOR MONTHS. SHE NEVER LEAVE YOUR HOUSE.
KATRINA IS NOT OLD. SHE IS NOT SICK. WHY MUST SHE LIVE LIKE A HERMIT NOR SPEAK A SINGLE WORD OR SMILE ANY MORE. WHY?
LET'S GO.
YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED! WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME? I AM YOUNG. I WORK HARD. I HAVE MONEY SAVED... MY OWN FARM, MY REPUTATION IS GOOD. WHY CAN'T I COURT KATRINA?
I WILL NOT GIVE MY CONSENT! NOW TAKE YOUR HAND
WHY, EVARD? WHY? EVERYBODY KNOWS? HAVE LOVED KATRINA SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN! WHAT HAS COME BETWEEN US?
MY FATHER IS A STRANGE MAN. WITH AN IRON WILL, WE CANNOT QUESTION HIM. WE CAN ONLY OBEY!
THAT NIGHT AT THE VILLAGE TAVERN...
YOU ARE A SLY FOXIE THERE IS SOMETHING YOU KNOW... BUT YOU ARE NOT TELLING, ALL DAY IT HAS BEEN ON THE TIP OF YOUR TONGUE. WHAT IS IT?
NO! I HAVE HAD TOO MUCH
YOU CAN
YOU TELL ME THIS SECRET YOU'RE HIDING SPEAK!
"HERE IS NOTHING.
YOU HAVE NOT PAID FOR YOUR DRINKS.

HERE TAKE YOUR BLASTED MONEY. I'VE GOT TO GO AFTER HIM
YOU'LL NEVER FIND HIM NOW ... IN THAT FOG COME BACK HANSEN
HE KNOWS SOMETHING AND HE IS GOING TO TELL ME WHAT IT IS
EVARD
EVARD WHERE ARE YOU
W-WHO'S THERE? WHAT DO YO WANT?

BEAST MUST HAVE ATTACKED HIM!
EVARD! W-WHAT HAPPENED?
GREAT HEAVENS!
GRRRRR!
YOU DEVILS! YOU SHALL NOT FIND ME SO EASY A MARK!
COME BACK HERE! COME BACK!
THERE IS NO SENSE FOLLOWING THEM! THE FOG SWALLOW THEM UP! I'LL NEVER FIND THEM AGAIN!
EVARD'S DEAD! HIS THROAT RIPPED OUT! AS IF THE BEAST INTEND TO SUCK THE BLOOD OUT OF HIS BODY! BUT THEY
YOUR SON IS NOW DEAD, ELSTED DO YOU STILL WANT TO DO NOTHING? THE
CANNOT FIGHT THE SUPERNATURAL!

ONE ON THE HAND. THE BEAST SCREAMED IN PAIN AND RAN FROM ME! I KICKED THE OTHER! AND IT'S BODY HAD SUBSTANCE. GHOST OR PHANTOMS DO NOT RUN FROM MEN. CREATURES FROM BEYOND DO NOT FEAR MERE MORTALS!
I HAVE SPOKEN. I WILL DO NOTHING. I HAVE BURIED MY
WHAT AN OBSTINATE MAN
MEMBERS OF HIS
HE DOES NOTHING
YOU'RE WRONG
SECRET
KNEW THE SECRET
WAS GOING TO FORCE
WHEN HE DIED
WON'T SPEAK
KATRINA
FROM HER LIPS
AS THE FOG ROLLED
FURIOUS AT ME.
SHORTLY AFTER AT THE FARMHOUSE
GASP
PAST YEAR. THE STRANGEST HAS BEEN THE
FATHER.
LET ME NEAR YOU. WHY?
YOUR MOTHER
WHAT THE COST

SPEAK!
HE TELL US WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT THOSE MURDERS? SPEAK KATRINA! I'M FORCING YOUR JAWS OPEN!
GRRGR!
TO SHARP POINTS! YOUR GUMS ARE LIKE THE PINK GUMS OF A BEAST!
B-BANDAGE!
GGROWRR
EEEARAGHA!
EEEEE.
BANG!
BANG
BANG!
NOW YOU KNOW MY SECRET.
FOR FEAR HER FANGS WOULD BETRAY HER!
SLOWLY KARL HANSEN UNWRAPPED THE BANDAGE FROM THE GIRL HE LOVED. THERE AS PLAIN AS DAY, WERE THREE DEEP SCARS. THE HAND HE SOUGHT IN MARRIAGE WAS HAND OF A MONSTER!
THE END

A TALE OF

SISTERS OF THE WITCH

OF WITCHCRAFT AND A STORM-
EM TOGETHER AND THE RESULT IS
ND DEATH FOR THE

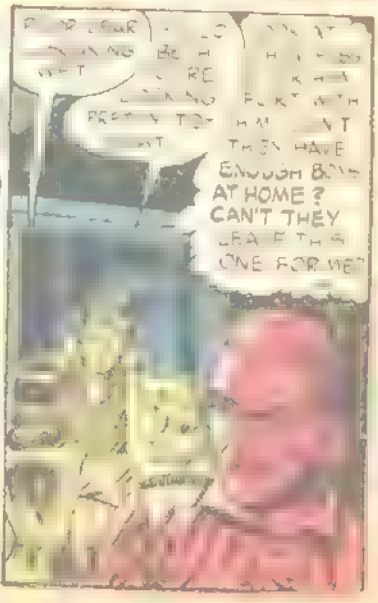
NIGH FALLS ON STORM-
WHIPPED "DEAD WITCH ISLAND"
WHERE STEVENS AN

ROB, YOU MUST BE FREEZING

LET ME TAKE YOUR COAT

HELL MAE ... TO TAKE THE BOAT TO THE MAINLAND, I'M AFRAID!

ENOUGH BOYS AT HOME? CAN'T THEY LEAVE THIS ONE FOR ME?



TELL US A STORY ABOUT THIS ISLAND
WELL, THE OLD FOLKS SAY... WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT IT BETH?
I CAN'T STAND TO WATCH THEM THROW THEMSELVES AT HIM ANY MORE! I MUST GET AWAY
MAE AND HER PRETTY FACE... LIL SHOWING OFF HER FIGURE... AND BETH PRETENDING TO BE SHY AND INNOCENT! I WISH COULD...
WHAT...
A HIDDEN ROOM! IT PROBABLY HASN'T BEEN OPENED FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS!
HALF AN HOUR LATER...
I'LL GIVE THEM ONE MORE CHANCE! I M BE KIND AFTER ALL THEN, IF T GIVE THE MAN I LOVE BACK TO ME, I'LL...!!!

FOR THE LAST TIME, MAE... LET ROB ALONE! I LOVE HIM...HE BELONG TO ME
OH, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS MARTHA! WHY WOULD ROB WANT TO LOOK AT A FACE LIKE YOURS, WHEN HE CAN LOOK AT A PRETTY ONE LIKE MINE?
GIVE UP, MARTHA! YOU'RE DOOMED TO BE AN OLD MAID, AND YOU KNOW IT!
ALL RIGHT THEN FOOL! SOON YOU FACE WILL BE ENOUGH TO DRIVE MAN MAD WITH TERROR!
THE SISTERS PREPARE FOR BED... ALL BUT ONE! THAT ONE IS BUSY BELOW THEM IN THE
MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL WHO'S THE UGLIEST OF ALL? SHOW HER, MIRROR! SHOW MAE HER REAL FACE!
THAT...THAT STRANGE FIRE IN THE MIRROR! AND MY FACE...MY FACE! IT'S CHANGING!
NO! NO! I CAN'T LIVE WITH A FACE LIKE THAT. I WON'T! I WON'T!
MAE, WHAT IS IT? OPEN THE DOOR... IT'S ROB!

ROB WHAT IS IT? S SHE ?
YES, BETH... SHE'S DEAD! BUT YOU MUSTN'T LOOK AT HER NOW... BELIEVE ME! I'LL GO TO THE MAINLAND TOMORROW FOR THE POLICE...
THE SEA WILL BE CALM ENOUGH TO LAUNCH A BOAT BY MORNING NOW LET'S TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP
ARE YOU CRAZY, MARTHA? ASKING ME TO GIVE ROB UP NOW... JUST WHEN HE NEEDS ME? BESIDES HE NATURALLY PREFERS ME TO A BAG OF SKIN AND BONES LIKE YOU!
PERHAPS WELL SEE AND SOON
AND AS MIDNIGHT SETTLES OVER DEADWITCH ISLAND...
COME, ALL YE CREATURES OF THE NIGHT... COME STING AND SCRATCH AND CLAW AND BITE! SOON THAT FLESH SO PALE AND PROUD SHALL WEAR NOUGHT BUT A BLOODY SHROUD!
POOR MAE! I WONDER ---WHAT'S THAT STRANGE HUMMING NOISE?
I CAN'T STAND IT AAAEEEEEE
REALLY SEE RATS AND ? CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER! I MUST GET HELP

BUT THE SEA, SON, IT'S DANGEROUS
I'VE GOT TO TRY, DAD. ...THERE'S NO OTHER WAY. DON'T LET BETH OUT OF YOUR SIGHT FOR A MINUTE WHILE I'M GONE!
BETH! NOT A THOUGHT FOR ME THROUGH...
FOR YOUR SAKE,
YOU MUST KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU
DON'T FORGET, ROB, AT LEAST YOU CAN BE SURE I'LL BE HERE WHEN YOU GET BACK
SURE, SURE, MARTHA DON'T WORRY BETH
BE CARE-FUL
I'M SORRY MARTHA
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL
BUT ROB LOVES ME
SOMEDAY YOU'LL MEET THE RIGHT MAN FOR YOU, AND...
EVERYTIME I LOOK AT HIM, MY HEART NEARLY BURSTS
DOES IT? THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA.
OH MARTHA SHE LOOK SO STRANGLY
BE THE MOST FITTING OF ALL... DEMONS OF DARKNESS BREAK HER HEART! MAKE IT GROW UNTIL IT

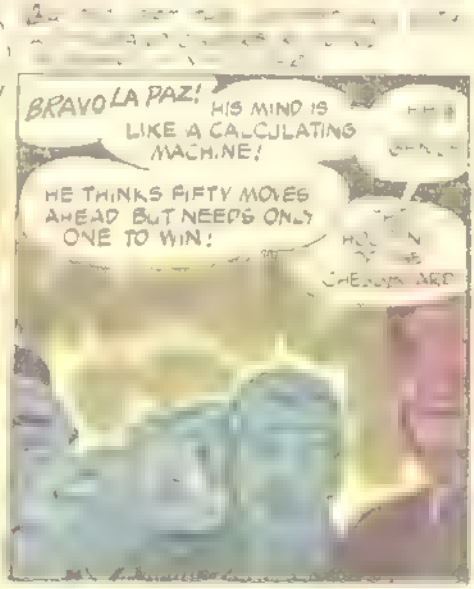
AND JUST AT THAT MOMENT OUTSIDE
WHAT DID SHE SAY TO ME?... CAN BE SURE I'LL BE HERE WHE... MARTHA. SHE'S RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THIS, SOMEHOW! I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE HOUSE.
BURST INTO THE INN...
OH ROB... MY HEART SEEMS TO BE GROW ING BIGGER...AND BIGGER! IT'S GOING TO...EXPLODE!
HANG ON DEAR DAD! WHERE'S MARTHA?
I THINK
COME ON DAD! BRING BETH WITH YOU, WE'LL STOP THIS HORRIBLE BUSINESS ONCE AND FOR ALL!
HURRY, ROB! IT...HURT SO!
ROB, WAIT! LISTEN, HERE BY THIS WALL!
OF DARKNESS BREAK HER HEART!
THAT SHE-DEVIL IS BACK OF THIS WALL, I'LL TEAR IT...THERE! IT'S
NEVER COULD FIND IT!
YOU MAD WOMAN, LET BETH FREE OF YOUR EVIL SPELL
COME ON N! I'VE BEEN EXPECT NG THE THREE OF

YES, YES... I'VE BROUGHT OUT MY STAR PERFORMER FOR YOU! LOOK... MY FIERY SNAKE OF DEATH! I LEARNED MANY THINGS FROM THIS BOOK... AMONG THEM, HOW TO KILL YOU ALL! YOU ALL HATE ME, SO YOU ALL DIE... THE MOST EVIL ONE FIRST!
BABBLING MONSTER!
SHE'S POINTING AT YOU! RUN, BETH!
NO! NOT ME
NO ROB! YOU CAN'T HELP HER NOW... LET- GET OUT OF HERE.
GGGHHHHHH!
ALL RIGHT BETH?
YES... THE PAIN IS GONE NOW; BUT ROB, WHAT A TERRIBLE DEATH FOR MARTHA!
SHE BROUGHT IT ON HERSELF. SHE TOLD THAT... THAT THING TO KILL THE MOST EVIL ONE IN
MOVE AWAY- BOOK OR NO
WONDERFU JUST TO BE ALIVE AND ABLE TO LOVE

A TALE OF HORROR

GAME OF DEATH

RAMON LA PAZ WAS THE GREATEST CHESS PLAYER IN THE WORLD! HE HAD JUST WON THE WORLD'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP IN PARIS...



ALL THIS CAME AS NO SURPRISE TO SIMON LA PAZ WHO WAS AS CONVINCED OF HIS SUPERIORITY AS A KING IS SURE OF HIS ROYALTY! THE ADULATION AMUSED HIM ONLY TO A POINT...
THE PRESS IS WAITING FOR
GREATNESS SHOULD STAND ALONE ..ALOOF...OUT OF REACH! GREATNESS WRAPS ITSELF IN MYSTERY! LET THE WORLD WONDER....AND WORSHIP WHAT THEY WONDER.
SO SIMON LA PAZ STROLLED ABOUT THE PRIVACY OF HIS DRAWING ROOM, BOREDLY EXAMINING THE MANY TOKENS OF ADMIRATION HE D RECEIVE
FLOWERS POEMS GLOVES WATCHES MONEY...EVERYTHING UNSTIMULATING! DOES THE WORLD CONSIST OF ONLY MY OWN
LA PAZ WANDERED
AH? WHAT IS HERE?
WHAT EXQUISITE CHESS PIECES! THEY ARE SO LIFE-LIKE! LIKE TINY HUMAN BEINGS!
HERE IS A CARD! LET ME SEE....
THE CHEEK OF THE FELLOW! EVEN ASSUMING THAT AN UNKNOWN CAN DEFEAT ME!..WHO HAVE LAID LOW EVERY CHAMPION.

A CURSE ON THE FOOL! HE HAS AROUSED MY CURIOSITY! I MUST SEE THIS IDIOT WITH HIS DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR! ...78 RUE DE VANITE, EH?
RUE DE VANITE? THERE'S NO SUCH PLACE MONSIEUR, AT LEAST I NEVER HEARD OF IT
THERE ARE PROBABLY A MILLION THINGS YOU NEVER HEARD OF FOOL
I'LL FIND IT MYSELF.
BUT AFTER AN HOUR OF SEARCHING
THE PLACE DOES NOT EXIST IT MUST BE SOME PRANK PLAYED ON ME BY... THERE IS RUE DE VANITE I COULD HAVE SWORN WHEN I FIRST LOOKED AT IT THE SIGN READ RUE DE VANITE
78 THE FELLOW HAS MONEY NOTHING ELSE. THE ENTIRE BUILDING IS MADE OF MARBLE!
GOOD EVENING LA PAZ MY HOUSE WAS NOT EASY TO FIND EH?.... YOU LOOK SURPRISED. — IT'S MY HOUSE? — MY COSTUME PERHAPS, THAT AMAZES YOU?
IF I'D KNOWN IT WAS A MASQUERADE PARTY I'D HAVE WORE APPROPRIATELY DRESSED! DO YOU USUALLY DRESS SO BIZARRELY?
ONLY TO HEIGHTEN YOUR CURIOSITY. I ASSURE YOU... WHATEVER ELSE MAY STRIKE YOU AS CAMOUFLAGE. MY TALENT FOR CHESS IS MOST GENUINE. I HAVE NOT CALLED MYSELF THE NINTH BEST ONE WITHOUT REASON. SHALL WE ENTER THE CHESS ROOM?
GASP! — THIS IS LIKE A MEDIEVAL COURTYARD I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!
IS THE LEAST OF YOUR SURPRISES FOR I DON'T CONSIDER THE CHESS MEN NOTICE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT THEM?

THEY LOOK— (GASP!)— THEY ARE! T-THEY'RE ALIVE!
ONLY NOW— BEFORE THE GAME! WITH EACH MOVE YOU OR I WILL MAKE, ONE OF THEM WILL DIE! IT'S NOTHING TO BE HORRIFIED ABOUT! IT IS A GAME OF LIFE TO WIN AND LIVE—OR LOSE—AND DIE!

INCIDENTALLY, THESE ARE OUR STAKES TOO! THE WINNER WILL LIVE! THE LOSER DIES !!
Y-YOU'RE MAD! THE WHOLE THING IS MAD!! YOU, THE HOUSE, THE CHESS MEN, THE STAKES!!

SPOKEN LIKE A COWARD! ONLY A MAN WHO KNOWS IN HIS HEART THAT HE IS NOT A CHAMPION WILL SEEK EXCUSES TO ESCAPE THE SUPREME TEST OF HIS POWERS! GO, COWARDLY FAKE! GO BACK TO THE WORLD YOU HAVE DECEIVED WITH YOUR TRICKS!
THEN YOU THINK YOU CAN BEAT SIMON LA PAZ? VERY WELL, IDIOT! I SHALL HAVE YOUR LIFE AS PROOF OF MY GENIUS!

AND SO THE GAME OF CHESS BEGAN, EACH PLAYER TAKING HIS SEAT AT EITHER END OF THE GREAT HALL.
I AM READY, LA PAZ! MAKE YOUR FIRST MOVE
VERY WELL! PAWN 4-2!

EXCELLENT! PAWN 3-2

COMMANDS SNAPPED BACK AND FORTH. THE BOARD SEETHED WITH MOVEMENT THEN...
BISHOP 2-5-3!

EEEAAAAA!

(GASP!) H-HE KILLED YOUR PAWN!
HIS TRIUMPH WILL BE SHORT-LIVED! KNIGHT 2-3-2!
EEEIAGH
(GROA!) T-THIS IS HORRIBLE! I CAN'T LOOK!
BETTER LOOK, LA PAZ! IF YOU FORFEIT THE GAME... YOU'LL BE LYING DOWN THERE IN A POOL OF BLOOD! PLAY OR DIE!
LA PAZ PLAYED AND....
QUEEN 4-2!
...AND THE MASKED ONE PLAYED, AND MEN DIED... MANY MEN!
KNIGHT! 2-5-1
AARGH!
ROOK 2-3-4
BISHOP 1-4-3
PAWN 6-5
BUT NO MATTER THE MOVES, LA PAZ WAS LOSING! STEADILY LOSING! LOSING WITH EVERY MINUTE SUDDENLY.
KNIGHT 2-5-2!
WAIT! THAT MOVE... KNIGHT 2-5-2, TO TAKE THE QUEEN! IT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF ONLY ONE MAN!

ONLY ONE MAN ORIGINATED THAT MOVE! ONLY ONE MAN COULD BRING IT OFF! TALCHEV, THE RUSSIAN CHESS-MASTER! BUT YOU CAN'T BE TALCHEV! TALCHEV HAS BEEN DEAD FOR 20 YEARS!
THAT IS TRUE, UNFORTUNATELY.
'BUT FORTUNATELY, MY JEALOUSY AT YOUR FAME, LA PAZ, MADE ME RETURN FROM THE DEAD TO PROVE MY SUPERIORITY!
(GASP!) TALCHEV!
YES-TALCHEV! THE GREATEST CHESS-MIND IN HISTORY! THE GREATEST MASTER SINCE THE GAME WAS INVENTED! AND NOW THAT I HAVE DESTROYED YOUR QUEEN... I SHALL TAKE YOUR KING! YOU ARE CHECKMATE!
SCREAM ALL YOU LIKE, LA PAZ! PLEAD, WHEEDLE, GROAN... IT WON'T HELP! KNIGHT, 2-5-1!
THE GAME IS ENDED! NOW FOR THE FORFEIT! YOUR LIFE, LA PAZ YOU HAVE LOST THE GAME AND YOU MUST DIE!
PLEASE ...HAVE MERCY... TALCHEV MERCY!
WAIT, TALCHEV! YOU CAN'T KILL LA PAZ, BECAUSE YOU HAVE NOT WON!
WHO SAYS THIS? HE LIES. WHOEVER HE IS! LA PAZ'S KING LIES DEAD ON THE CHESS BOARD. VICTORY IS MINE!
NO, TALCHEV! VICTORY IS MINE! YOU CHEATED! WITH YOUR SUPERNATURAL POWER, TALCHEV, YOU KNEW EVERY MOVE OF LA PAZ'S IN ADVANCE! BEING ALREADY DEAD, YOU COULD NOT DIE IF YOU LOST!
I THEREFORE DESTROY ALL YOUR CHESS-MEN! YOU HAVE WON FRAUDULENTLY, THEREFORE YOU HAVE NOT WON AT ALL!

NARFSTAR

NOW, TALCHEV, YOU SHALL COME WITH ME...TO THAT PLACE WHERE YOU BELONG... WHERE YOU WILL BURN FOR ALL ETERNITY FOR YOUR CRIMES! MY WORD IS LAW!
NO! NO! NO! PLEASE I DON'T WANT TO GO!
NOBODY DOES! BUT YOU HAVE EARNED THIS TRIP! COME TALCHEV, I NEED COMPANIONSHIP...AND YOU'RE FIT COMPANY FOR THE DEVIL!
AAAA!!!!!E!
COVERING HIS EARS TO DROWN THE HIDEOUS SHRIEKS, LA PAZ FLED FROM THE HOUSE IN TERROR...
I-I MUST FIND A GENDARME! HELP! HELP!
GENDARME! QUICK! THE DEVIL IS AT 78 RUE DE VANITE! HE IS DRAGGING A MAN TO HIS FIERY ABODE! DON'T LOOK AT ME AS IF I'M CRAZY COME! COME!
(GASP!) THE STREET HAS DISAPPEARED! THERE IS CEMETERY HERE!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU, MONSIEUR, BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN!
LOOK! THE NAME ON THE MAUSOLEUM!... TALCHEV! IT IS HIS TOMB! (GASP!) I PLAYED THE GAME INSIDE TALCHEV'S TOMB!
I THINK MONSIEUR HAD BETTER LET ME TAKE HIM HOME! HE HAS HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK, YES?
TALCHEV THE GREAT
BUT WHEN LA PAZ GOT HOME, HE LOOKED AT THE TABLE AND GASPED
A REMINDER, LA PAZ! BEWARE OF ARROGANCE! BEWARE OF VANITY!...OR SOME DAY I SHALL COME FOR YOU!
THE NEXT DAY, SIME LA PAZ ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT. HE WOULD NEVER PLAY AGAIN AS LONG AS HE LIVED! NOBODY UNDERSTOOD WHY...EXCEPT ONE, PERHAPS AND "HE" WOULD KEEP LA PAZ'S SECRET!!
THE END